



# West Valley View

*The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ*  
*Phone (623) 535-8439*

Tuesday, September 25, 2007

## Board stalls on I-10 funds

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The Arizona State Transportation Board has delayed for 30 days making a decision on proposed funding to help three cities widen Interstate 10 through the West Valley.

The seven-member board spent considerable time discussing whether to provide \$7 million to help pay for speeding up the widening project, before tabling the matter, said Matt Burdick, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation.

The Transportation Board decided it needs to seek an opinion from the Arizona Attorney General's Office before proceeding further, Burdick said.

One issue that the opinion seeks to clarify is whether the Legislature in the most recent regular session intended to reimburse the cities up to \$10 million for interest charges. The three cities involved in the proposal are Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park.

State Sen. Robert Blendu, R-District 12, said that clearly was the reason lawmakers revisited the transportation acceleration program earlier this year.

"MAG [the Maricopa Association of Governments] decided to do something different with our state dollars," Blendu said.

After a couple of contentious meetings on the issue, the MAG Regional Council on Sept. 6 approved providing up to \$7 million in interest reimbursement. That vote negated a decision in August to give the three cities only \$6 million, with the cities required to come up with the rest.

During those meetings, representatives of the three West Valley cities argued that the Legislature had intended the cities get \$10 million. The West Valley position was voted down by officials from Phoenix and East Valley cities who argued that MAG should allocate money for the freeway projects, not the Legislature.

MAG is a regional planning agency created 40 years ago to oversee transportation and several other policy areas from a regional perspective.

The money would go to pay interest charges in issuing bonds earlier than planned for the widening project, which would widen I-10 to five lanes in each direction between Dysart and Sarival roads. That stretch of I-10 now has just two lanes in each direction. The construction costs of the widening have been estimated at somewhere between \$85 million and \$100 million.

Assuming the State Transportation Board approves the funding at its October meeting, the three cities that have been discussing taking part in the accelerated widening plan still would need to approve an intergovernmental agreement with ADOT and the Maricopa Association of Governments, the regional transportation planning agency.

ADOT can't move forward on putting the project out to bid until that agreement is completed, Burdick said.

Assuming that occurs soon after the State Transportation Board meets again, on Oct. 19, that would push the beginning of construction to early next year, Burdick said.

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